



Citation for published version:

Copestake, JG 2014 'Full guidelines for the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QUIP)' Centre for Development Studies, University of Bath, Bath, pp. 1-47.

Publication date:

2014

Document Version

Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication](#)

University of Bath

Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Qualitative Impact Protocol (QUIP) Guidelines for field use



Overview

How can the impact of development activities intended to benefit poor men, women and children caught up in complex processes of rural transformation best be assessed? There is growing demand for impact evidence within development agencies, both to support their own learning on effectiveness, and for public accountability. Independent impact assessment of projects is increasingly used to complement internal monitoring, but doubts remain over the reliability and/or cost-effectiveness of the many different alternative approaches to impact assessment.

The ART project addresses the issue of how specific interventions can be attributed to different stakeholders in a way that is reliable, timely and cost-effective, without distorting or constraining the development activity being assessed. We are developing and testing an impact assessment protocol using quantitative monitoring of key indicators alongside qualitative attribution of impact based on self-reported assessment of selected NGO programmes.

The testing covers four different projects over two years in Malawi and Ethiopia, assessing the impact of development activities intended to benefit agricultural communities. The quantitative monitoring is based on Evidence for Development's Individual Household Method and measures changes in factors contributing to household disposable income relative to basic food needs. A baseline study will be conducted for each project, followed up by two rounds of monitoring studies a year apart.

The qualitative monitoring is being undertaken using a new adaptation of the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QUIP) using semi-structured household interviews and focus group discussions to assess impact based on self-reported attribution. This document contains guidance for all those involved in carrying out a QUIP in the field, as well as the household and focus group interview schedules being used in the ART project.



Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. Which method? Deciding what data is needed and how to collect it 4

 2.1 Why use the QUIP rather than other forms of impact assessment? 4

 2.2 The issue of bias 5

3. Carrying out the QUIP 7

 3.1 The QUIP Commissioner 7

 Broad scoping of the study 7

 Recruiting the lead evaluator and lead field researcher 8

 Sample selection 8

 Quality assurance, dissemination and use 11

 3.2 The Lead Evaluator 11

 Recruiting the lead field researcher 11

 Refining data collection instruments 12

 Briefing the lead field researcher 12

 Moving in the field and arranging interviews 13

 Data quality control, debriefing and data analysis 13

 Using the findings 15

 3.3 The Lead Field Researcher 16

 The key principles of the QUIP 16

 Before field work starts 17

 Conducting household level interviews 18

 Conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) 19

 After field work 20

 List of outputs required 21

 3.4 Field Researchers 50

 Code of Conduct 50

4. QUIP: Individual Household Interview 22

5. QUIP: Focus Group Guidelines 37

Introduction

These guidelines aim to assist in planning and using qualitative methods to evaluate the impact of a development project. Section 1 is addressed primarily to the commissioner of a study. The commissioner can be anyone who (a) identifies the need for a credible ‘reality check’ on how the project is affecting its intended beneficiaries, and (b) is in a position to authorise work to meet this need. Section 1 covers what kind of impact evidence might be needed and different options for obtaining it – using this qualitative impact protocol (or ‘QUIP’) being one. Section 2 explains the practicalities of carrying out a QUIP, going into more detail about the specific roles of commissioner, lead evaluator and lead field researcher in turn. Appendices include illustrative data collection schedules and a final report.

Shaded boxes provide further insight into how to use the QUIP by sharing experiences of piloting its use as part of the ‘ART project’. This is an on-going action research project, led by the University of Bath, into assessing rural transformations. For more about this project and how to contact us see www.gobath.ac.uk/art. As these guidelines are still being developed and tested, we particularly welcome feedback on them.

Key Terms

QUIP stands for qualitative impact protocol. These guidelines are designed specifically to guide qualitative assessment of the impact of rural livelihood projects. At the same time, they can also be adapted to address other kinds of development project.

Development project is defined broadly to include any planned activity funded by one organisation or group and intended to improve the wellbeing of a defined group of intended beneficiaries. The QUIP can be used to assess the performance of on-going as well as time-bound activities.

Evaluation is also defined broadly to include systematic enquiry into how a project worked or is working: how far, how cost-effectively and how sustainably it is realising its intended goals, and the appropriateness of these goals. This can incorporate impact assessment, but goes beyond it.

2. Which method? Deciding what data is needed and how to collect it

There are many methods for obtaining evidence about the impact of development projects. Each offers a different 'take' and there are good reasons for using more than one approach. The QUIP aims primarily to collect rich and credible narrative descriptions of the causal links between project activities and changes in the wellbeing of intended beneficiaries. It does this by providing intended beneficiaries with the opportunity to describe their experience in an open way that places a high value on their personal perceptions and priorities. Asking intended beneficiaries directly about project impact seems both common sense and ethically correct, but doing so in a credible way is not easy. One challenge is to minimise bias in the evidence offered, recorded and shared – e.g. because respondents say what they think researchers want to hear. A second challenge is to distinguish between changes arising out of the project and those that would have happened anyway. This entails framing conversations in such a way that respondents understand that they are being asked to contrast what has happened to them with what they think might have happened even if the project had not taken place. At the heart of the QUIP (and its claim to provide more credible evidence) is a particular focus on how these challenges can be addressed. An additional challenge is to ensure evidence is not only sufficiently credible but also relevant, sufficient, affordable and timely to meet the needs of those using it.

2.1 Why use the QUIP rather than other forms of impact assessment?

This is a big question and it is beyond the scope of these guidelines to answer it in detail. But here are a few potential advantages of the QUIP relative to three alternatives:

- experiential learning
- quantitative methods
- other forms of qualitative research.

By experiential learning we mean what we learn as practitioners through first-hand experience of the project and direct communication from others directly involved with it. This is generally the first and most important source of evidence that informs organisational learning, and the counterpoint against which you will assess evidence from other sources. It is also cheap. But is it enough? One problem is that personal familiarity with a project can restrict or bias the way you think about it. The QUIP generates evidence with the added credibility of being collected in a more transparent way by researchers without prior understanding of the project, or an interest in its outcome. Their specialised expertise and professional reputation can also add to the quality and credibility of the evidence they provide.

Quantitative methods, including randomised control trials, can generate precise estimates of the magnitude (and hence importance) of typical or average impacts, and these can be tested for statistical significance. They work best when project 'treatments', intended outcomes and the links between them that are relatively stable, clearly understood and easily quantified. The QUIP, in contrast, aims to be useful in more complex and uncertain situations. Demand for impact evidence may primarily be to confirm prior theories and expectations of what would be achieved and how. Or there may be a need for more open-ended and exploratory assessment to check for unexpected outcomes, geared more to decisions about how to adapt, expand or develop future activities. The QUIP lies more towards the exploratory than the confirmatory end of this spectrum. It mostly only provides evidence of the nature of impact rather than its magnitude, but it offers a more detailed picture of how and why this varies within groups of respondents, as well as between them. It is also scalable: more interviews can be added as necessary to capture different experiences of intended beneficiaries. Sampling and questionnaire design can also be adjusted to focus a QUIP on more specific issues and/or sub-sets of intended beneficiaries. It also has the potential advantage of being both cheaper and more flexible than most forms of quantitative impact assessment.

While the QUIP is not designed to generate strictly quantitative estimates of typical or average impacts, it may nevertheless support better estimation of these by contributing to more accurate modelling or micro-simulation of impact. To realise this potential it generally needs to be combined with systematic quantitative monitoring of project activities and results. This synergy illustrates the more general point that the QUIP can often best be used as one of several complementary components of a larger evaluation.

Many other forms of qualitative research can be incorporated into impact assessment, ranging from participant observation to process tracing. Indeed confusion over the sheer variety of qualitative research methods and philosophies explains in part why they are not used more for impact assessment. We make no claim that the QUIP methodology proposed here is better or worse than other qualitative approaches. However, we are strongly of the view that if it is to be used more frequently in impact assessment then the process of qualitative research, and the logic behind it, needs to be explained more fully and openly. In the absence of a clear account of how qualitative research is conducted potential users are unable to distinguish between good and bad studies, and so end up using it less. Clearer and more thoroughly tested guidelines for using qualitative research in impact evaluation can also, we hope, help to reduce their cost and the time lag between commissioning them and obtaining results.

2.2 The issue of bias

To improve the quality of qualitative approaches to impact evaluation, guidelines and standards need to explain more openly how potential sources of bias and error are being minimised. These include the following:

- 1) sampling bias - in selection of households and who to interview within affected households;
- 2) problems arising from respondents' lack of sufficient knowledge or understanding of what is being asked (e.g. due to limited recall, failures in translation, conceptual misunderstanding) or cognitive abilities (e.g. to do necessary calculations, make required judgements or imagine what would have happened without a project);
- 3) more general inclination of respondents to interpret events positively or negatively, or to limit the scope of what they say to outsiders, partly influenced by the way they perceive these outsiders (as influenced by age, gender, ethnicity, affiliation, status etc.);
- 4) bias arising from the way interviews are conducted, including overly narrow agenda-setting, asking prompting or leading questions, poor listening, and explicitly or implicitly encouraging respondents to emphasise specific causal factors;
- 5) errors, omissions and bias on the part of analysts in interpreting, documenting, summarising and reporting data.

The challenge is not only to address and minimise these potential biases, but to document how they are addressed and mitigated with sufficient clarity and detail to convince other stakeholders (e.g. colleagues, donors, supporters, policy-makers) of both the general validity of the method and the reliability of findings generated (see box for a discussion of these and related terms). One of the key mechanisms by which bias can be reduced is by creating an appropriate distance between the interviewer and the project being assessed. A key principle of the QUIP is that data collection should be conducted by someone not directly involved in the project. Such independence potentially enhances the credibility of findings by reducing possible response bias on the part of intended beneficiaries interviewed. It also reduces the potential influence on the field researchers of prior views they may already have about the project. It cannot be guaranteed that the data collection process will be completely blind with respect to the project, but we can go some way towards this. For this reason it is also better that the lead field researcher is appointed from outside the organisation implementing the project.

Potential for bias also arises in data analysis, which entails summarising a large and varied set of narrative statements. Separating this task from the actual data collection helps makes this more transparent. However, unlike data collection, this task also necessarily requires knowledge of the project itself and of its theory of change. It is mainly for this reason that the QUIP distinguishes clearly between the roles of lead evaluator and lead field researcher.

The ideal is to avoid pro-project bias in data collection by keeping the former in the dark about the project. In contrast, the lead evaluator performs the role of bringing together the data collected from the field with data specifically about the project (including its theory of change) for joint analysis.

While they should have no direct involvement in the project it is possible that a lead evaluator might be appointed from within the organisation implementing the project and/or commissioning the study. Keeping the role in-house can strengthen internal learning and the feedback loop from evidence to action. However, one practical advantage of appointing an independent lead evaluator from outside the organisation is that they can then manage recruitment of the lead field researcher in a way that leaves them completely unaware of the identity of the project they are evaluating.

For the first round of the ART project the role of lead evaluator was played by the University of Bath in the UK. It then independently identified and recruited lead field researchers from among university staff in Ethiopia and Malawi. The latter were provided with general information about the QUIP study and its goals, briefed about the methodology and provided with lists of people to interview. They remained unaware of the identity of the projects and of the NGOs implementing them.

More Key Terms

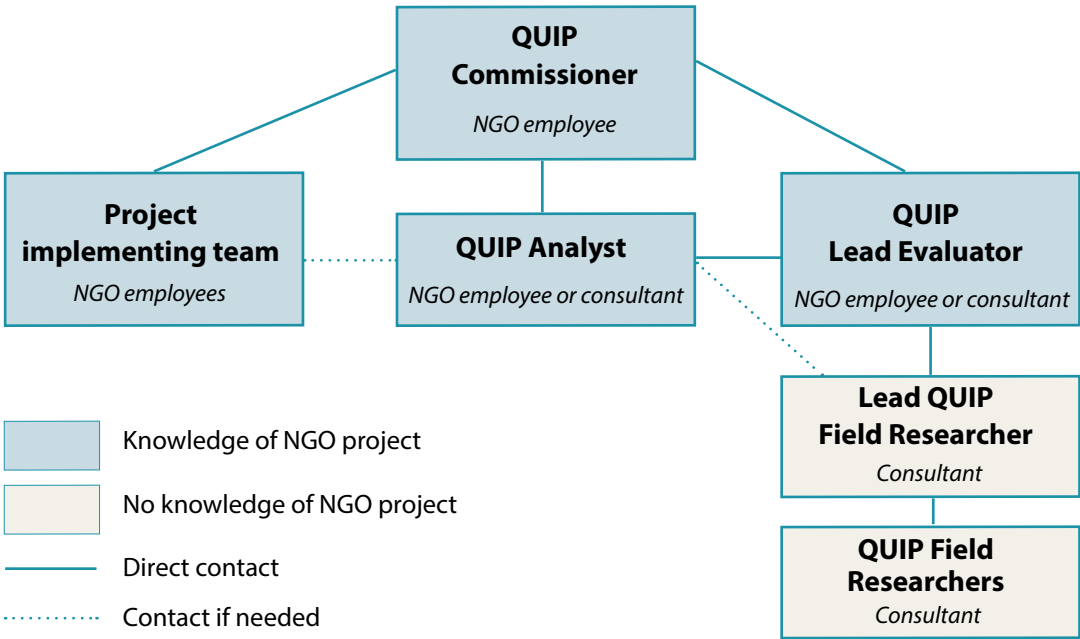
- Validity refers to the extent to which the research design can be defended from criticisms of bias or false inference. It is common to distinguish between:
- Construct validity – are key concepts understood in the same way by users, researchers and respondents, or is some of the meaning being distorted or lost?
 - Internal validity – are conclusions rigorous in the sense of having been logically derived from the evidence obtained and presented, subject to explicitly stated assumptions?
 - External validity – on what basis can findings be generalised to other times and places?

Reliability refers broadly to replicability or the probability that the same conclusions would result from repeating the study. Poor application of a method by unqualified researchers undermines the reliability of evidence produced even if the design itself is valid. However, given that no two studies can ever be replicated exactly it is in often very difficult in practice to distinguish problems of validity and reliability.

Credibility refers to how believable a particular finding or conclusion is to a particular person or audience. It acknowledges that their capacity to assess the validity and reliability of findings depends upon their own independent knowledge, experience and opportunity for cross-checking or triangulation against other sources. This contrasts with the quest to establish universal truths that are valid and reliable independently of the perceiver. In aspiring to produce reasonable or ‘good enough’ evidence the success of the QUIP ultimately hinges on the credibility of findings.

3. Carrying out the QUIP

This section details in turn the recommended roles and responsibilities in using the QUIP of the commissioner, lead evaluator and lead researcher.



3.1 The QUIP Commissioner

The commissioner is the primary consumer of evidence to be collected, and responsibility rests with them to decide what sort of evidence they want, as well as when, where, how and why to collect it. At the same time the QUIP is designed to minimise the amount of time that the QUIP demands both from the commissioner and from project staff. This helps to reduce potential bias, but also avoids distracting them too much from their other operational responsibilities.

Broad scoping of the study

The first task is to decide which projects need to be evaluated and when. This may be dictated by the requirements of external funders and/or by policies for selective impact evaluation across the organisations’ complete portfolio of projects. It will be informed by the need for evidence to support internal learning, as well as external accountability. Timing will also depend on the phasing of the project’s implementation and its expected impact trajectory over time. The QUIP relies on respondent recall over a specified period, and so the ideal is to do repeat studies every few years, including after the project ends. And while intended primarily for impact evaluation the QUIP can also, in principle, be used to investigate drivers of change prior to a project, as part of the design process.

Scope for using the QUIP will also obviously depend on the availability of funding. Many factors influence what constitutes a ‘good enough’ impact evaluation. For example, the case for a larger study will be stronger if it can influence decisions to extend or replicate a project. Other cost considerations include choice of sample size, as well as the nature and extent of project monitoring activities on which the QUIP can build. These issues are discussed below. One advantage of the QUIP is that it is possible to start small and if necessary extend or replicate studies: confronted with complex projects and contexts then there is a stronger case for this approach, rather than risking all available resources on one large blue-print study.

Recruiting the lead evaluator and lead field researcher

The main roles of the lead evaluator are set out in Part B. Any experienced qualitative researcher or consultant should be able to carry these out. Experience in the selected country and region is likely to help, not least by allowing closer interaction with both the lead field researcher and with project staff. The lead evaluator will need to be familiar with the principles of qualitative data analysis and with use of Excel. They should also be in a position to manage the sub-contracting of the lead-researcher. Other important considerations are integrity, reputation, availability and cost. While responsibility for selecting the lead field researcher can be left to the lead evaluator, the commissioner can also participate in their identification and selection. However, they should not be in direct communication with them as this will undermine the blinding process.

One exercise that can inform selection of the lead evaluator is to share these guidelines with candidates and invite comments on them. This has the additional benefit of enabling the lead evaluator to have some input into the task. Likewise the lead evaluator, once recruited can share the guidelines with potential lead researchers.

The ART project set out to test a model based on two field researchers spending five days in the field for a total budget not exceeding £5,000 per study. The feasibility and cost-effectiveness of this remains to be established, you can follow updates on the project’s findings at: go.bath.ac.uk/art

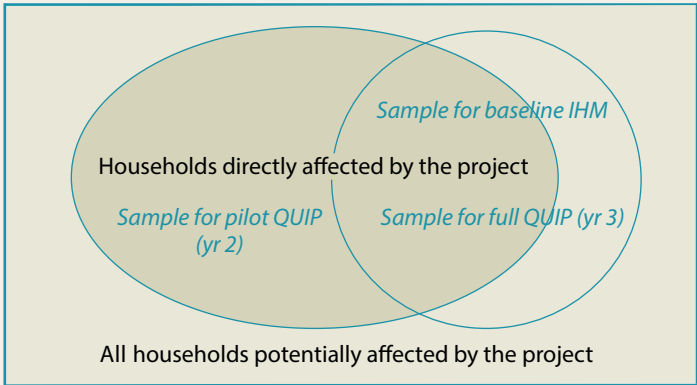
Sample selection

The commissioner of the study should oversee and approve the sample size and sampling strategy. They will also need to authorise release of relevant lists of the names and locations of intended project beneficiaries from project staff to the lead evaluator. Details will vary according to context, but the best general method for selecting direct from a list of all households potentially affected by the project is most likely to be two-stage stratified random sampling. In the first stage all project localities (e.g. villages) are listed according to some known criterion that is likely to be an important source of variation in project outcomes (e.g. distance from a main road or market centre). One locality is then selected at random, and additional localities are selected by counting X down the list, where X is the number of localities divided by the desired sample number. For example if there are 40 villages with an equal number of beneficiaries in each, and it is agreed to sample four of them, then every 10th village should be selected from a random starting point on the list. In the second stage the procedure is repeated, except starting with a list of all beneficiary households in each selected village.

While not strictly necessary, it is highly desirable that the QUIP should build upon and complement quantitative monitoring of changes taking place at household level in the project area. This opens up opportunities to cross-check self-reported evidence of drivers of change obtained using the QUIP against estimates of change in selected indicators obtained through routine monitoring. Routine monitoring of all or a sub-set of intended project beneficiaries also provides a useful frame for sample selection. Selection of households for the QUIP need not overlap with the sample of households covered by routine monitoring, but if you are seeking to undertake a comparison of differences this will be complicated by the fact that the studies are based on different samples.

Sampling Strategy

The ART project is investigating how the QUIP can be combined with data on food and economic security at the household level obtained using the Individual Household Method (IHM). Information about the IHM can be found on the Evidence for Development website: <http://www.efd.org/our-work/methods/the-individual-household-method-ihm>. Two sampling strategies are being used. The diagram below illustrates.



In the case of the ART project the IHM is intended to provide estimates of changes in the overall real disposable income of selected households between base-line and end-line surveys approximately two years apart. From these data it will be possible to estimate the change in disposable income per adult equivalent (Y) for each household between the two surveys. This will in turn permit a stratification of the IHM data in two ways: by baseline level of poverty (initial disposable income per adult equivalent); and by change in this variable over time.

The diagram illustrates this by distinguishing between bottom, middle and top terciles in each case, but stratification could also be into quintiles or an even larger number of groups. This provides nine categories of household for quota sampling, raising the issue of which categories to sample, and how many interviews to conduct within each. For example, there is a case for giving particular attention to the poorest households who have also experienced falling incomes. Whatever the sampling strategy, a critically important factor is that selection within these categories by the researcher should be randomised.

		Change in Y between periods (households ranked from most positive to most negative)		
		Most positive	Mid tercile	Most negative
Level of Y at baseline (households ranked from richest to poorest)	Highest (richest)			
	Middle tercile			
	Lowest (poorest)			

Quality assurance, dissemination and use

The commissioner retains overall responsibility for their work and should monitor progress accordingly. Key milestones include appointment of lead evaluator and lead field researcher, start and finish of data collection, delivery of raw data on Excel sheets, completion of data coding, and completion of the final report. There is a particularly good case for taking a more active part in the last two of these stages, as close involvement with the narrative data both enable staff to judge its authenticity and absorb detail. The template for the final report is relatively short, enabling it to be produced quickly and readily digested. Hence it is feasible for it to be shared widely among internal and external stakeholders interested in the project.

3.2 The Lead Evaluator

These guidelines can be incorporated or adapted into the terms of reference for the lead evaluator recruited to carry out the study. As discussed previously, this person may be an employee of the same organisation as that implementing the project, but contracting someone from outside to perform the role is likely to strengthen the credibility of the evidence produced. Either way, the lead evaluator’s first task is to recruit a lead field researcher to collect the data. This person should not be an employee of the organisation implementing the project, but could possibly work in the same organisation as the lead evaluator, so long as the latter is able to conceal from them the identity of the project implementing agency.

Recruiting the lead field researcher

Finding the best person to lead data collection is perhaps the single most important determinant of success, hence it is worth investing in a rigorous search and selection process. Open and transparent selection is also likely to add to the credibility of the findings. Criteria for selection of the lead researcher are set out in the box below.

Criteria for selection of the lead field researcher

- 1) Their qualifications and experience (particularly with qualitative research methods), including that of named field workers to assist them. Evidence that they have carried out similar work to a high standard in the past.
- 2) Knowledge of general context, including relevant languages.
- 3) An appropriate mix of gender and other attributes across the research team (e.g. more women if primary respondents are likely to be mostly women).
- 4) The quality of context specific proposals about how they will conduct the study, including: how long data collection will take, logistics of travel and accommodation, compliance with timetable, proposed modifications to the research guidelines, overall feasibility, and the quality of codes of conduct they use for guiding staff in the field.
- 5) Evidence of their awareness of different forms of potential bias, and of how the process of data collection and reporting will affect its credibility. One potential source of such evidence is the quality of comments and queries they provide on these guidelines, including explanations of how they aim to adapt them to a particular context.
- 6) No prior direct involvement with the project, given that the aim is to provide independent evidence. While the QUIP seeks to limit the researchers’ prior knowledge of the project, such ‘blinding’ cannot be guaranteed, and so is no substitute for recruiting researchers with a high level of professional integrity as social scientists.
- 7) Price.

Refining data collection instruments

The QUIP employs two data collection instruments: semi-structured household level interviews and focus groups. Appendices 1 and 2 provide illustrative examples of interview and focus group schedules. Note the distinctive role that generative, supplementary and closed questions play. Generative questions are designed to stimulate discussion in an open way. Supplementary questions should be used to sustain and deepen conversations about changes observed by the respondent and the reasons behind them. Closed questions follow open-ended discussion of the same topic, and are a useful way of drawing discussion of them to a conclusion. There are two reasons why both household level interviews and focus groups should start discussion of any topic with broader generative questions before focusing on more specific ones: (a) to maximise the opportunity for respondents to raise unknown and unexpected issues; (b) because information about reasons for change (including those arising from specific activities) that is provided voluntarily or without prompting is more credible.

The instruments provided in the appendices are only illustrative and an important task for the lead evaluator is to amend, refine and extend them to fit specific research goals agreed with the commissioner. These should also be reviewed by the lead field researcher and adjusted through pre-testing.

Briefing the lead field researcher

By the time they are contracted, the lead researcher should already be familiar with these QUIP guidelines, having been invited to offer written responses about its design and utilisation as part of their own selection. Initial briefing of the lead researcher by the commissioner should cover the following.

- 1) Lists and locations of households from which to select respondents, along with instructions as to how to do so, and how to handle replacement in the event of any non-response
- 2) The interview and focus group discussion schedules. It is essential that the researcher pre-tests this in order to identify any problems of interpretation and to gauge likely interview times. These should be followed up by a second meeting to discuss issues raised and to agree any changes to the schedules or fieldwork plan
- 3) Details of how the researcher will be introduced to selected households
- 4) Details of the format of expected research outputs and how they will be checked
- 5) Research ethics, including codes of conduct for field work and use of data

It is very important that researchers are not be briefed on the project and its activities, particularly its underlying theory of change and key indicators. This includes avoiding including any links to websites or project background documents which may include project specific information. This will help to reduce bias arising through asking questions that lead or prompt respondents further than indicated in the interview schedule.

Moving in the field and arranging interviews

To maintain their distance from the project implementing agency the field research team should make their own arrangements in the field, including minimising reliance on immediate project staff in helping them to locate respondents. However, the lead evaluator you will need to arrange for introductions to official gate-keepers at the appropriate level and with the necessary supporting documentation. Field workers should each be given an appropriate letter that can be shown to respondents and to any other interested party, introducing them personally and explaining their role (see draft in the box overleaf).

Note that the purpose of the research should not refer directly to the project itself but to the underlying issue(s) it seeks to address. The main reason for this is to reduce pro-project response bias. While the project may have been the immediate prompt for the study its ultimate purpose is to contribute towards the underlying development goal it addresses, hence this line of introduction is not untruthful. Being less than fully transparent about the purpose of the interview is ethically contentious, but can be defended on the basis that it results in more reliable and therefore useful information.

Suggested wording for introductory letter

“To whom it may concern, [...researcher’s name ...] is employed by [...], who have been contracted to conduct a study of prospects for promoting farming and food security in [... specify project area ...]. Appropriate government authorities have been informed. All personal information collected will be held in strict confidence, made anonymous and used only for purposes of this research.”

*The plan for the pilot QUIP studies in 2014 was as follows. Eight semi-structured interviews to be conducted in each of two villages per project by a team of two researchers, each completing two per day. Total time required 16/(2*2) = 4 days. Four FGDs conducted on fifth and sixth days, with 16*2 = 32 interviews, and planned participation of 32/4 = 8 per focus group. Separate FGDs were organised for each village: one for women and one for men, excluding household heads.*

Data quality control, debriefing and data analysis

The next role of the lead evaluator is to take delivery of findings and assess whether they have been arrived at with the expected accuracy and rigour. Deliverables from the researcher should include notes and recordings, completed Excel spreadsheets containing all individual and focus group data. If possible a face-to-face meeting with all members of the research team should be arranged for post-research debriefing. This should cover both substantive findings (and questions arising from them) as well as debriefing on the data collection process: what went well, obstacles, difficulties, doubts and any other thoughts relevant to interpretation of the data. This also provides the research team with an opportunity to share additional material and ideas arising from the field work.

Detailed analysis of the QUIP is the responsibility of the lead evaluator. Separating primary data collection from analysis introduces extra objectivity and quality assurance to the research. However, involving staff of the commissioning organisation in the analysis is also a good idea as this enables them to learn directly from reading and coding transcripts. While a final report and associated coded transcripts can provide a thorough analysis, this cannot match the more detailed learning that comes from reading through all responses.

For the ART project pilot, the role of lead evaluator was taken by the University of Bath. While this added to the independence of the study it did make coding of data more difficult because analysts relied on written statements about the theory of change behind the project. Information about project activities in selected villages was also less detailed than hoped.

A key principle of rigorous analysis is that it can in principle be blind replicated by an independent party to test whether the same inferences are drawn from the data. The design of the spreadsheet and standardised reporting method mean that a third party could indeed replicate all or part of the analysis of the same data as a cross-check.

Production of a synthesis report

The first step is to decide on an index, or list of themes, for reordering the raw textual data. This will partly be informed by prior ideas and hypotheses - including the project’s theory of change (e.g. agricultural production will increase due to project activities, but subject to other ‘confounding’ influences – see box for more examples). However, additional and unanticipated themes and hypotheses, arising from eye-balling the data and from discussion at the debriefing, can also be inserted (e.g. intra-household tension over how additional cash income was spent). At the same time, the more closely the index corresponds to the structure of the interview schedule the less work is involved in reordering the data.

Having decided on the index, data relevant to each theme is then charted in a table, with rows for each respondent and columns for topics within the theme. This can be done by cutting and pasting material from the original reports into an Excel spreadsheet, or using more advanced software such as NVivo. The final step is then to produce a written theme-by-theme account of the data, generalising across households to the extent that the data permits this. A simple way of doing this is to write a paragraph or two on each topic that weighs up the quality and frequency of narrative information supporting or opposing particular hypotheses about changes as reported by the respondents, along with the explanations they offered for them. The report may also include discussion of how different concepts are understood by respondents, explore variation in what they said (e.g. according to household type) and identify other patterns in the responses. The evidence can also be systematically compared and contrasted with evidence obtained through monitoring.

Analysing the QUIP in Excel

The ART project is currently developing a standardised reporting format which the QUIP Excel spreadsheet supports. This combines elements of the two approaches set out below, using codes to differentiate between types of attribution in different domains of respondents’ lives, based on the project’s theory of change. Statements are coded according to positive and negative variations of the following. Statements that:

- (a) explicitly attributed impact to project activities*
- (b) were implicitly consistent with the project’s theory of change*
- (c) referred to drivers of change that were incidental to project activities.*

One of the main advantages of this process is that all the coding and grouping of data can all be completed within Excel and Word, avoiding the need for other expensive software or training. The analysis and report generation is also designed to be quick and easy, using pre-programmed macros in the spreadsheet, combined with a straightforward reporting template. A transcript of all coded data is automatically produced once coding is complete, designed to be attached to the report. This ensures that all the data is presented rather than only the quoted extracts selected by the evaluator.

It must be stressed that the coding and analysis of the interviews is still a manual process, whichever software is used, and this process offers an important opportunity for learning. The QUIP spreadsheet uses macros to avoid the need for cutting and pasting, and to automate the production of tallies and tables – it does not try to replicate analytical thinking or assessment. The final table (which gets to the heart of the attribution question) defines a list of contributory factors cited by respondents as the reason why their lives or livelihoods have changed. The production of this table remains a purely manual process, albeit aided by the coded transcripts which make it relatively easy to find the relevant information.

The next stage of this reporting in ART (Strand 3) will be to combine the qualitative data with quantitative monitoring data in order to build up a more detailed picture of change in selected individual households, and what factors may have influenced outcomes in different types of households. More information on the analysis process and the template report can be found online at go.bath.ac.uk/art.

Using the findings

The final stage of the study is to explore the consistency of the evidence generated with the prior expectations and ideas of the implementing agency and other stakeholders. Key interpretive questions include:

- To what extent are findings consistent with both transmission mechanisms and intended outcomes set out in the theory of change underpinning this particular project?
- What evidence of processes and outcomes is generated that is not consistent with the original theory of change, and how can these be explained?
- How representative of the whole project are findings, taking into account possible sampling biases?
- What explains differences in intended and observed processes and outcomes of the project and what are the implications for future activities?

The lead researcher need not necessarily be a part of these discussions, and indeed if they are to conduct further rounds of data collection it is better that they should not be.

Negative or unexpected findings may be a source of internal tension, with some staff or stakeholders preferring to see them buried or dismissed without proper reflection. While this raises broader issues a general principle is to pre-commit to at least one reasonably quick dissemination event, involving both internal and external participants. This should allow findings to be contextualised and compared with other organisations, broadening the scope for evidence-based learning.

In the case of the ART project, dissemination workshops have been planned and budgeted for in both Ethiopia and Malawi. But that should not preclude thinking about how findings will be shared internally within each organisation, and also before project completion.

3.3 The Lead Field Researcher

This section is intended to guide the lead field researcher contracted to carry out a study using the QUIP (qualitative impact protocol) and can be incorporated into their terms of reference. The lead evaluator and lead field researcher should ensure its contents are fully understood by all members of the field research team.

The key principles of the QUIP

The QUIP offers a systematic qualitative approach to assessing the impact of rural development activities or projects on selected households. It relies on encouraging respondents to provide us with a full and accurate account of changes that have occurred to their lives and livelihoods over a clearly specified period. This information is collected using a semi-structured household interview schedule, followed up with focus group discussions.

Careful phrasing and sequencing of questions provides an opportunity for respondents to explain in their own words why they think these changes have happened. The quality of evidence obtained about the impact of any particular activity in this way depends on:

- 1) the extent to which respondents volunteer such evidence without prompting;
- 2) how fully you understand what respondents say;
- 3) how accurately you document what they say;
- 4) the internal consistency of the explanations they provide ;
- 5) the consistency of explanations they provide with evidence obtained from other sources.

The credibility of this evidence to wider audiences also depends on how clearly and fully the methodology employed is documented and shared. Simply asking those affected by a particular development project what effect it has had on them may seem to be a common-sense way of assessing its impact, and also one that upholds the principle of giving them greater voice. However, bias and misinterpretation can creep into the collection and reporting of people's own accounts in many ways. The QUIP aims both to help you minimise these, and to be open about possible biases that nevertheless remain. In short, the quality of the process of data collection and reporting is paramount. These guidelines outline how you can present both findings and a full account of how you obtained them to a high standard.

Before field work starts

You and your research team are providing respondents with the opportunity to share their everyday life experiences, particularly the opportunities and obstacles they face in achieving economic and food security. Respecting what they say and faithfully presenting this to the commissioner and other users of the evidence generated is paramount. For example, it is very important that you do not prompt respondents to focus on those activities that you think may be of most interest to the commissioner. One criticism of many impact studies is precisely that are prone to pro-project bias, including a distorted view of how important projects or other development activities are relative to the many other things going on in people's lives. In other words, your role is not to evaluate a particular project. Rather it is to provide rounded and reliable evidence about what is happening in a particular area that can contribute to more comprehensive and realistic evaluation of projects or other development activities. For this reason there is no need for you to be briefed or even to know very much about particular projects or activities of interest to the commissioner of the study. Indeed it is better that you don't know any more about the project, because not doing so makes it easier to avoid letting prior expectations on your side influence the data you elicit and record.

The commissioner of the study will provide you in advance with the following:

- 1) Lists and locations of households from which to select respondents, along with instructions as to what quota of interviews to complete for each category, and how to handle replacement of selected respondents in the event of any non-response.
- 2) Details of how you should be introduced to the community in the study area, as well as to selected households, in a way that makes clear to them your independent research role.
- 3) The draft household interview schedule and focus group checklist
- 4) Details of the format of expected research outputs and mechanisms for assessing their quality

The commissioner of the research or their designated representative will also arrange a briefing meeting with you to address any questions you may have. You will also be asked to introduce those who will be assisting you with the research, or provide details about them, in order that the final composition of the research team can be confirmed, along with details of fieldwork dates, deadlines, language(s) to be used in interviews and other practical details.

Guidelines such as this can only go so far in promoting high quality field work, which ultimately depends more on the skills, experience, attitudes and practice of you and your team as researchers. Preparation is also important. It is essential that you and your team should rehearse introductions, interviewing and reporting using real data in order to identify any problems of interpretation, check how long interviews and focus group discussions will take, and to talk through issues that arise. Preparation should include practice interviews using the schedule and also note-taking and production of interview reports. You should also discuss standards of conduct, including research ethics and how to build a strong and respectful rapport with respondents. In short, developing the right research ethos doesn't happen by accident: it needs to be actively cultivated through leadership and team building.

Any substantive issues arising from testing and training should be discussed with the commissioner or their representative. In particular, all modifications to the interview format, timing, sample size, length of written reports, budget and so on should be agreed before starting with the main field work. Another issue to discuss is whether it is culturally appropriate or not to offer respondents a token gift as thanks for their participation in the study, and if so what.

Conducting household level interviews

Sensitivity and courtesy in making introductions and conducting interviews shows appropriate respect towards respondents, and will also improve the quality of the information researchers obtain. This is particularly important when it comes to the semi-structured narrative part of the schedule, when the aim is to augment the formal 'interviewer-interviewee' relationship with the more trusting 'storyteller-listener' relationship.

Having been introduced to the respondent and explained who you are, it is important that you make clear that their participation is entirely voluntary, that they can choose to end the interview at any time and that information collected will remain confidential and used without reference to them personally (see code of conduct for field research in Appendix 3).

To put respondents at their ease it is important to be flexible and patient about choosing an appropriate time and place for the interview. Flexibility is also needed to ensure that targets for the number of interviews to be conducted per day do not undermine data quality by making you feel pressured and stressed.

The semi-structured interviews will primarily be conducted with the designated head of the selected household, but there need be no restriction on the involvement of other household members, particularly if they are better placed to answer specific questions – e.g. about particular crops. Issues like what crops to grow or how to spend money may have been a source of disagreement and even conflict among household members. If this becomes evident during interviews then note down what is said and by whom. However, the main purpose of these interviews is to collect the best possible account of overall changes in the household, and reasons for these changes. It is not to probe into internal conflicts or power relations, and certainly not to risk exacerbating them. Different perspectives can be explored further in follow-up focus groups.

Attention also needs to be given to managing unsolicited 'spectators' of interviews, who may even want to interject with their own suggestions and comments. Such spectators may limit or bias what respondents' say. For this reason their presence should be politely and respectfully but actively discouraged, particularly if it appears in any way to be making the main respondent nervous or uneasy. However, the presence of others (e.g. close neighbours or relatives) can also be very supportive of a respondent, and may enhance the quality of data provided. Hence this is an issue that you and your assistants need to manage in a flexible and sensitive way, with common sense and good humour.

Note the distinctive role that generative, supplementary and closed questions play in the interview process. Generative questions are designed to stimulate discussion in an open-ended way. Supplementary questions can be used to sustain the conversation about this topic, but need not be used if the topic is raised anyway. You should feel at liberty to add in your own supplementary questions to gather more depth on particular changes and their causes. Note useful additional questions down on the schedule. Closed questions should follow open-ended discussion of the same topic, and indeed may be a useful way of drawing discussion of them to a conclusion. There are two reasons for leaving these to the end of each section: (a) to maximise

the opportunity for respondents to raise unknown and unexpected issues; (b) because information about reasons for change provided voluntarily or without prompting is more credible.

The main form of communication in these interviews is verbal, both because it is swift and direct, and also because (e.g. compared to written responses) it enables all respondents to participate in the same way, even those with limited formal education. The questionnaire schedule (such as that provided in Appendix 1) provides a structure for the interview and you should not deviate from this sequence. Communication should be in whichever language the respondent is most comfortable. Field notes can also be recorded in this language, or in the language that will be used later for producing the interview report: whichever the interviewer feels most comfortable with. Interviewing and detailed note-taking of the semi-structured part of the interview is not easy and needs practice. Using pro-forma sheets with space laid out for notes alongside the list of generative and supplementary questions can help. However, since the interviewer will not be able to write down everything they say during the interview itself it is essential to schedule sufficient time for typing up the interview as soon as possible afterwards when their memory is still fresh – wherever possible this should be on the same day.

It is good practice to record interviews so long as (a) permission is secured from the respondent first, (b) it is absolutely clear that the act of recording is not distracting them or making them feel uneasy. The reason for doing this is NOT to make word-by-word transcripts of the recordings onto paper, because this is normally too time-consuming and expensive. Rather they can be used as a back-up to your memory to verify particular statements made by the respondent. The recording should also be carefully labeled and saved as an archive for quality assurance and possible follow-up research.

Conducting focus group discussions (FGDs)

In addition to the semi-structured interviews described above the QUIP incorporates focus group discussions. These are intended to address questions that respondents may be reluctant to explore in the setting of their own household (about gender relations, for example), as well as to deepen and broaden evidence on the main drivers of rural change in the area. The focus groups also progress from empirical questions (e.g. what happened, and why) to more subjective questions (e.g. what mattered most, to whom, and why). At the same time they divert attention from the respondent to "people like them" and are filtered by a different reference group (in terms of age and gender). Depth and quality of data in this case arise from the way members of the group interact with each other. While perhaps encouraged to say things they wouldn't in their own home, they may also be inhibited from saying other things.

To build on narrative data already collected the focus groups should involve members of households already covered by the semi-structured interviews. This also makes them easier to organise, because invitations to participate in them can be made at the time of these interviews. Each household interviewed can be invited to send one person (not the household head) to one focus group. To encourage participation and broaden the conversation this person can also be asked to invite a long a friend from another household. At the same time focus groups should be organised separately for people with different demographic characteristics: younger men, younger women, older men and older women, for example. But the precise number and their composition will vary according to context and the resources available for the study. The research team should provide two people to facilitate each FGD; the lead facilitator should be of the same gender as the group, with the other person taking notes. You should aim to ensure a minimum of four participants are present in each group and a maximum of ten. How you choose to introduce the discussion and the questions you ask will vary according to the location. Appendix 2 provides an illustrative example that you can adapt.

As with interviews, it is important to take care to select a suitable location: convenient for participants to reach, and from which spectators and other distractions can be excluded. The sequence of discussion should be fixed in advance, through drafting of a list of generative questions – Appendix 2 providing an example. Supplementary questions should be employed more sparingly, so as not to inhibit the way respondents ‘spark’ off each other, and with FGDs there are no closed questions. To ensure the conversation does not splinter and that everyone gets to speak it may also be helpful to give the group a stick that can be handed from the member of the group who is speaking to the next person.

Careful notes should be taken by the co-facilitator on what is said topic by topic, and discussion should only be digitally recorded as a back-up if everyone agrees and it is clear that nobody is made nervous by the presence of a microphone. Notes should be typed up onto a computer as soon as possible after the focus group is complete, structuring the report in line with the topics covered.

After field work

Responses to closed questions in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups should be directly typed into the Excel sheets provided, using the shaded areas indicated. Instructions for using these special sheets are contained in the file. Regular saving and backing up of copies should be made while information is being entered.

Writing up respondent responses is a delicate art that requires an ability to sift, summarise and sort notes from an interview in which the respondent(s) may have departed substantially, but sometimes usefully, from the outline structure. Developing this ability to write short but accurate summaries takes time and needs close supervision and support. Above all those transcribing should seek to record as fully as possible statements about changes experienced by respondents to their lives and livelihoods, particularly those that explain causes behind the changes. Length of transcripts is a matter that can usefully be clarified with the commissioner prior to field work and in the light of initial testing. As team leader you should check each report produced by your research team and ask another member to check yours.

As soon as data collection and initial recording is complete you should write a brief report on the fieldwork and send it to the commissioner. This will provide you and your team with the opportunity to share observations and ideas arising from the research that are not captured by the recorded data. It will also provide a chance for you to comment on research methodology and implementation, such as whether particular households were more evasive in their answers and whether respondents struggled with particular questions, and if so why. Within this you should include a section which presents your own perceptions about the impact of development interventions in the villages visited. The commissioner or their representative will also want to review the written outputs from the fieldwork, and to check some of these against field notes and recordings.

List of outputs required

1. Report on pre-testing of instruments.
2. A brief activity report on the work undertaken: training, sampling, timeline, who conducted which interviews, plan and departures from the agreed plan, difficulties encountered, suggestions for improving the methodology.
3. Original schedules of semi-structured interviews with hand-written field notes and timeline sheets (one per household).
4. Data from semi-structured household interviews and focus group discussions (paper and Excel format)
5. Digital recordings of interviews and focus group discussions.
6. A brief report summarising the researchers’ experiences in the field, and own perceptions about the impact of development interventions in the villages visited.

3.4 Field Researchers

Any research involving people as participants or respondents must be based on ethical principles. This note sets out the minimum ethical standards required in all research conducted or commissioned under Strand 2 of the ART project. These guidelines should be issued to all field researchers undertaking a QUIP.

Code of conduct for field researchers

The three principles of research ethics:

- respect: the researcher must recognize the capacity and rights of all individuals to make their own choices and decisions
- beneficence: the researcher’s primary responsibility is to protect the physical, mental and social well-being of all participants
- justice: the researcher must ensure that the benefits for participants are at least as great as the risks

Putting the principles into practice:

These principles need to be reflected in each stage of research including: designing research; selecting participants; gaining their consent; conducting the research; and using the research findings. They should also apply to conduct of researchers in the field even when they are not engaged in formal data collection activities – when talking informally to others, while waiting for transport or taking food, for example.

Designing research:

- The research must be designed to reduce risks for participants and increase their possible benefits from its outcome.
- The research must be designed especially to protect vulnerable participants.
- Questions for surveys and interviews should be respectful and phrased in culturally-appropriate language

Selecting participants:

- Participants should not be involved in research that has no potential to be of benefit to themselves. Possible outcomes - such as improved policies for supporting rural livelihoods in the longer-run - may be benefits if the individual participants consider them to be so. Some participants may feel a benefit simply from having the chance to tell their story. But it is up to them to decide whether or not this is a benefit.
- No individual or group of participants should face more risks than benefits from participating.

Gaining the consent of participants:

Researchers must gain informed and voluntary consent before doing research with participants. This means that the participants must:

- have the relevant information about what the research is
- understand it, including the possible risks and benefits to themselves
- be free to choose whether or not to participate, without inducement
- give their consent, either written or verbal
- have the right to withdraw from the research at any time

The depth of this consent-taking process will depend on the topic of research and the extent to which it could impact on the participants' lives. If research involves children (as defined by national law, or those under 18) then their parents or guardians must also give consent. It is best to get their written consent, in (the rare) case of disputes later. Special care must be taken when seeking consent from vulnerable groups, for example prisoners, or people with no access to healthcare. Researchers must ensure that no participants are forced to take part, for example by other family members or by local authorities.

Conducting the research:

- Researchers should be appropriately trained for the task. They need to have good self-awareness and strong listening skills.
- Research should be conducted in places that are socially comfortable for the participant, and where they are able to speak freely.
- If the participant has incurred direct financial costs for participating then they can be reimbursed, but they should not be paid to participate.
- It may be appropriate to offer participants a token gift to thank them for their participation. If so, this should be agreed in advance within the commissioner of the research.
- Appropriate local authorization for carrying out the research should be obtained.
- The participants should be informed who is commissioning the research and how they can contact them should they wish to do so.
- If a participant reports any serious adverse effects as a result of participating – such as losing their job, or being beaten up – then this must be reported to commissioner of the research.

Using the research findings:

- The participants should be informed of how research findings are to be used.
- They should be informed that what they say will not be attributed to them personally.
- If testimony is quoted anonymously, or with a false name, then care should be taken to ensure that any other identifying details are also changed.

4. QUIP: Individual Household Interview

Section A. Introduction

Note down answers to 1-7 before the start of the interview
Coding: We suggest you use a code that contains two or three letters from the village/area name, followed by a number. e.g. Individual Household data from the city of Bath would follow this pattern: BA1, BA2, BA3 etc. Focus Group Discussions would simply add the prefix F; FBA1, FBA2 etc. Please be consistent in your coding.

A1	Household code	
A2	Name of household head according to the sample list	
A3	Contact details	
A4	Names of village	
A5	Actual location of interview (if different from above)	
A6	Date and time of interview	
A7	Name of the interviewer	

My name is [...] and I am employed by [...] as a field worker. We are conducting a study into how the income and food security of people living in this area is changing and what can be done to improve this. We are doing this research for [...] and with the approval of the [local authorities]. They have supplied us with a list of households to contact, but we cannot contact all of them, so we have chosen a smaller number at random, including yours. The information we collect will be used for the purposes of this research only, and will not refer to you or to your household by name. You do not have to take part in this study. You can decide if you would like to take part or not. We will not inform anyone else about your decision. If you do decide to take part you can also change your mind and end this interview at any time. And if you do agree to take part, but there are some questions you do not wish to answer this is also fine. You can refuse to answer as many questions as you want.

During this interview I will write down your answers. Later these notes will be typed into a computer. We will not use the information in any way that will enable others to identify you as its source. Our hope is that this research will be helpful in promote farming and food security here and in other places like it.

A8	Are you or is another member of the household willing to be interviewed?	YES/NO
A9	IF NO: record here any reasons given for not wanting to proceed or any observations for this	
A10	IF YES: would you prefer us to interview you, or someone else in the household, or both of you together?	SELF/OTHER/TOGETHER
A11	Write down the name of the main interviewee	
A12	To make sure our record of the interview is accurate we would like to make an audio-recording of the interview. Are you (both) happy for us to make this recording?	YES/NO
A13	Most of our questions refer to what has happened in the last two years, in other words since [specify reference event...] Can you remember this?	YES/NO
A14	IF NO, explore what other event can help them to be clear about the time period and to write down what this was here. Please specify...	

Section B. Household composition

B1. Please can you tell me who currently belongs to your household?

<i>Relation to interviewee</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Residency last year (months)</i>	<i>Describe any chronic illness or disability</i>
Self					

Thank you. I would now like to ask you some general questions about changes over the last two years - in other words since [specify] took place. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Indeed it is your choice of what to say that is most interesting to me.

Note the remaining sections start with a generative question, and include a number of optional supplementary questions (in italics), which you can use to encourage more detail. If you want to ask additional questions then write them down in the left hand column also. Each section then finishes with some closed questions

B2. Please tell me the main things that have happened to your household during this period.

- *How has the composition of the household changed?*
- *How has your health and those of other household members been?*
- *What are the main reasons for these changes?*

Section C. Food production and cash income

C1. Please tell me how your ability as a household to **produce your own food** has changed since then, if at all.

- *What are the reasons for these changes?*
- *What about livestock?*
- *Have you taken up any new activities to help you produce more food?*
- *Is there anything you have stopped doing?*
- *Are you doing anything differently compared to others?*

<p>C2. Please tell me how your ability as a household to earn money has changed since then, if at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have you taken up any new activities for earning cash?</i> • <i>Have you stopped any activities?</i> • <i>Are you doing anything differently compared to others?</i> • <i>What are the reasons for these changes?</i> 	
<p>C3. Overall, how has the ability of your household to produce enough food to meet its needs changed in this time?</p>	<p>Better, No change, Worse, Not sure</p>
<p>C4. Overall how has your cash income as a household changed over this time?</p>	<p>Higher, No change, Lower, Not sure</p>

Section D. Cash spending and food consumption

<p>D1. Please tell me how what you spend money on as a household has changed since then, if at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the reasons for this?</i> • <i>Is there anything you are spending more on now? Why?</i> • <i>Is there anything you are spending less on? Why?</i> • <i>Do you think these changes are good or bad?</i> 	
--	--

<p>D2. What about food consumption: how has this changed, if at all?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Are there things people consume now, but didn't before?</i>• <i>Or no longer consume?</i>• <i>What is the reason for these changes?</i>	
<p>D3. Overall, how has what you as a household can purchase with money changed over the period?</p>	Better, Worse, Same, Not sure
<p>D4. Overall how much are you eating as a household compared to this time two years ago?</p>	Better, Worse, Same, Not sure

Section E. Relationships

<p>E1. Please tell me how relationships within your household have changed since then, if at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How about changes in how decisions are made over food? Or money?</i>• <i>Or about how work is shared out? Or use of assets?</i>• <i>What are the reasons for these changes?</i>	
---	--

E2. Please tell me how your **relationships with others living in this village** have changed since then, if at all.

- *What are the reasons for these changes?*

Section F. Change in household assets

F1. Please tell me whether you have acquired or disposed of any significant assets during this period?

- *Why did you do this?*

F2. Overall, do you feel the combined total value of all your assets has gone up or down over the period?

Up, Down, Same, Not sure

Section G. Change in external relationships

G1. Please list the most important links you have with organisations from outside the village. *What have you done with this organisation and what difference has this made to you? How have your links changed and why? Please rank the organisations you have listed, starting with the one you value most*

Name	Activity	Change	Rank

G2. Overall, taking all things into account, how do you think the well-being of your household has changed during this period?

G3. Please explain your answer

Better, Worse, Same, Not sure

Don't forget to thank the interview for their participation, and invite them to ask you any questions they have. Note down what these are, and if they prompt issue relevant to the research that you would like to share.

NOTES:

6. QUIP: Focus Group Guidelines

Section A. Introduction

Note down answers before the start of the focus group:

- 1. Research area
- 2. Location of the focus group meeting
- 3. Date and time of focus group
- 4. Name of the facilitator
- 5. A list of the participants, indicating which come from households also interviewed
- 6. Type of focus group – younger women, younger men, older women, older men

Welcome, my name is [...] and I work for [...] who have recently been contracted by [...] to conduct a study of prospects for improving farming and food security [amend as necessary] in this area. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this group discussion. We are interested to discuss with you together recent changes in people’s lives and livelihoods in this area. You are welcome to share your own personal experiences or to talk more generally about those of other people like you in this area. What you say will be confidential and will be used only for research purposes. You are also free to leave at any time. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

Section B. Open questions.

For each sub-section start with the generative question and use supplementary questions only as necessary to encourage a freely flowing or narrative answer.

	Generative question	Examples of supplementary questions
1	How has the ability of people like you to produce your own food changed over this period, if at all?	<div>- <i>What about livestock products?</i></div> <div>- <i>What are the reasons for these changes?</i></div> <div>- <i>What do you think are the most important changes, and why?</i></div>

2	How has the ability of people like you to obtain money changed, if at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Are there any new sources of cash?</i>- <i>What do you think are the most important changes, and why?</i>
---	---	---

3	How has the ability of people like you to spend money changed, if at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Are there things people buy now, but didn't before? Or no longer buy?</i>- <i>What do you think are the most important changes, and why?</i>
---	--	--

4	What about food consumption : how has this changed, if at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Are there things people consume now, but didn't before? Or no longer consume?</i>- <i>What do you think are the most important changes, and why?</i>
---	---	--

5	Please tell me how relationships within households in this area have changed, if at all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>How about the way work is shared out?</i>- <i>How about the way money is used?</i>- <i>How about the way decisions are made?</i>- <i>What are the reasons for these changes? What do you think are the most important changes, and why?</i>
---	---	---

6	How have relationships between households living in this area have changed since then, if at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Have some people become better off, or worse off compared to others? If so why?</i>- <i>What do you think are the most important changes, and why?</i>
---	--	--

7	What changes have made in people’s asset holdings during this period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>What assets have people acquired? How? Why?</i>- <i>Any others?</i>- <i>What assets have people disposed of? How? Why?</i>- <i>Any others?</i>
---	--	--

8	Please tell me how your relationships with organisations from outside the village have changed since then, if at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have any new organisations started providing services? - Or stopped?- What are the reasons for this?- What do you think are the most important changes, and why?
---	--	--

9	Please list the most important links you have with organisations from outside the village.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>What have you done with this organisation and what difference has this made to you?</i>- <i>How have your links changed and why?</i>- <i>Please rank the organisations you have listed, starting with the one most valued</i>
---	--	--

ORGANISATION'S NAME	RANK	ACTIVITY & COMMENTS

10	Overall, taking all things into account, how has your wellbeing changed during this period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>What explains this?</i> - <i>Is it the same for all households?</i> - <i>Is it the same for men and women?</i> - <i>What about older people?</i>
----	---	--

11	Is there anything else you would like to add about recent changes?
----	--

Don't forget to thank the participants, and invite them to ask you any questions they have. Note down what these are, and if they prompt issues relevant to the research that you would like to share.

END

ART: The Background

What is ART?

Assessing Rural Transformations aims to address the issue of how best to assess the impact of development activities intended to benefit poor communities, particularly when the intervention takes place in the context of complex processes of rural transformation. The ART project seeks to address the issue of how changes can be attributed to different stakeholders or events in a way that is credible, timely and cost-effective, and avoiding pro-project and confirmation bias. It will develop and test a qualitative impact assessment protocol (the QUIP), using quantitative monitoring of key indicators and qualitative, self-reported attribution of impact of selected NGO programmes.

ART is working with two NGOs: Self Help Africa (SHA) and Farm Africa (FA), focusing on their work promoting rural development in Malawi and Ethiopia. The QUIP testing will cover four different projects over two years in Malawi and Ethiopia, assessing the impact of development activities intended to benefit agricultural communities.

How will we test the QUIP?

The hypothesis to be explored is that there is scope in complex contexts for rigorous and cost-effective impact assessment using self-reported attribution by respondents - rather than using participatory approaches to impact assessment, or approaches that rely on statistically inferred attribution using either randomised control trials or quasi-experimental methods. The research comprises three complementary strands:

- Strand 1 consists of a set of four baseline studies, followed by two rounds of mid-term monitoring studies conducted by Self Help Africa and Farm Africa with specialist technical support from the NGO Evidence for Development who have developed the pioneering Individual Household Method (IHM) for measuring household level cash income and food consumption.
- Strand 2 consists of two rounds of impact studies by independent consultants who are 'blinded' as far as possible to avoid bias (i.e. given no information about local project interventions), using the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QUIP) - semi-structured interviews based on a self-reported attribution methodology.
- Strand 3 consists of two rounds of meta-evaluation, through which the quality of evidence obtained under Strands 1 and 2 will be reviewed, along with evidence of how it was interpreted and utilised by different stakeholders, and how it affected relationships along the aid chain. A particular focus here is on what evidence obtained from the QUIP added to that obtained from the monitoring studies, and whether this justified the extra cost.

The project aims to have an impact on methodological debates over appropriate forms of M&E and impact assessment within the NGO/development agency community, aid policy networks, academia, and amongst the general public where there is increased demand for more information about the success of development projects.

www.gobath.ac.uk/art

